

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2257

INFO AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMCONGEN HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 13850

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, JA

SUBJECT:NEW MIKI CABINET: PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

REF: TOKYO 13849

SUMMARY. NEW MIKI CABINET DIFFERS LITTLE FROM ITS PREDE-
CESSOR IN IMAGE, POLICY ORIENTATION OR FACTIONAL STRUCTURE.
INCUMBENTS REMAIN AT MAIN ECONOMIC AND DEFENSE POSTS. NEW
FOREIGN MINISTER, ZENTARO KOSAKA, HAS PREVIOUSLY SERVED IN POSITION
AND IS STAUNCH FRIEND OF US. AS FOR ONGOING CONSERVATIVE LEADER-
SHIP STRUGGLE, WE VIEW NEW LDP LEADERSHIP AS SETBACK
FOR MIKI, ALTHOUGH HE GAINED SUPPORT IN NEW CABINET. WHAT IS
CERTAIN IS THAT LIFE OF NEW CABINET WILL BE BRIEF: YEAREND
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GENERAL ELECTION IS REQUIRED. END SUMMARY.

1. WITH LESS THAN THREE MONTHS TO SERVE BEFORE REQUIRED YEAREND ELECTION, NEW MIKI CABINET APPEARS TO DIFFER LITTLE FROM ITS PREDECESSOR IN IMAGE, POLICY ORIENTATION OR FACTIONAL BALANCE. MOST OF ITS MEMBERS ARE POLITICAL VETERANS, PARTICULARLY THOSE IN KEY POSITIONS. THOSE WHO EXPECTED A MIKI "IMPRINT" OR NEW START WERE DISAPPOINTED. AS IS USUALLY CASE, CABINET REFLECTS EXTENSIVE HARD BARGAINING AMONG THE FACTIONS WITH RESULTING GAINS AND LOSSES ONLY AT MARGIN. PRELIMINARY SOUNDINGS WITH JOURNALIST FRIENDS INDICATE MEDIA ASSESSMENT TOO, IN TIME HONORED TRADITION THEY ARE LIKELY TO REPORT THAT WILL BE SURPRISE-FREE. NEW CABINET LACKS FRESHNESS, REFLECTING ONLY CURRENT FACTIONAL CONFLICTS AND BARGAINING.

2. THERE IS LIKELY TO BE LITTLE PERCEPTIBLE CHANGE IN POLICY ORIENTATION--OR EVEN STYLE OR NUANCE. WITH FEW EXCEPTIONS, THERE HAS BEEN FOR EXAMPLE, NO CHANGE IN MAIN ECONOMIC PORTFOLIOS: MAIN MINISTRIES WENT TO INCUMBENTS. FUKUDA WILL CONTINUE AS ECONOMIC OVERSEER. OHIRA REMAINS AT FINANCE, KOMOTO AT INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND INDUSTRY. SIMILARLY, SAKATA STAYS ON AS DEFENSE AGENCY CHIEF ASSURING RARE CONTINUITY IN THAT POSITION.

3. SELECTION OF ZENTARO KOSAKA AS FONMIN WAS CHANGE, BUT ALMOST CERTAINLY MODEST ONE. KOSAKA HAS PREVIOUSLY SERVED AS FONMIN (1960-62), IS STAUNCH FRIEND OF US, AND IS VERY MUCH KNOWN QUANTITY. HE HAS ALREADY PLEDGED TO CONTINUE JAPAN'S "PEACEFUL" FOREIGN POLICY AND LITTLE POLICY CHANGE IS EXPECTED OR LIKELY, PARTICULARLY GIVEN BREVITY OF HIS TERM. HIS SELECTION WAS ALMOST CERTAINLY DUE TO SUPPORT GIVEN MIKI DURING RECENT LEADERSHIP STRUGGLE BY ORGANIZATION OF LDP ELDERS, STYLED "CHIYODA GROUP", WHICH HE FORMED LAST YEAR. EQUALLY INTERESTING IS ABSENCE OF HIS PREDECESSOR AS FONMIN, KIICHI MIYAZAWA FROM NEW CABINET. HIS FAILURE TO BE REAPPOINTED MAY BE ATTRIBUTED TO HIS DIFFERENCES WITH MIKI OVER PAST SEVERAL MONTHS, HIS FAILURE ON TWO RECENT OCCASIONS TO SIDE CLEARLY WITH CABINET OPPONENTS OF MIKI, AND HIS BARELY CONCEALED AMBITION TO BECOME PRIME MINISTER WHICH HAS NOT GONE UNNOTICED BY PRIME MINISTERIAL CONTENDER OHIRA, HIS FACTION LEADER.

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4. MAIN FOCUS OF INTEREST HERE WAS SELECTION OF LDP SECGEN AND WHAT IT MIGHT TELL OF MIKI'S INTENTIONS TO PERSIST IN POWER OR RETIRE GRACEFULLY. MIKI'S OWN CHOICE FOR SECGEN WAS FORMER LDP POLICY AFFAIRS BOARD CHAIRMAN RAIZO MATSUNO WHO, WHILE OSTENSIBLY A MEMBER OF THE FUKUDA FACTION, HAS SERVED MIKI LOYALLY AND WELL DURING CONTINUING LEADERSHIP STRUGGLE. AFTER PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF MATSUNO, HOWEVER, LDP EXECUTIVE BOARD, CONTROLLED BY MIKI OPPONENTS, REFUSED TO APPROVE

APPOINTMENT. AT HASTILY CALLED CONFERENCE OF MAIN FACTION LEADERS (EXCLUDING TANAKA) TO SETTLE MATTER, FUKUDA PROPOSED THAT OHIRA BE NAMED SECGEN, A SUGGESTION REJECTED OUT OF HAND BY MIKI. UCHIDA, ORIGINALLY SLATED TO BE POLICY CHAIRMAN AND DESCRIBED BY ONE REPORTER AS AN OHIRA PUPPET WAS EVENTUAL COMPROMISE CHOICE. THERE ARE GRAVE DOUBTS ABOUT HIS ABILITY TO CONDUCT AN ELECTION, OBVIOUS ROLE OF A SECGEN AT THIS JUNCTURE, AND THIS PERCEIVED DISABILITY IS UNDOUBTEDLY WHAT MIKI RIVALS FUKUDA AND OHIRA HAD IN MIND WHEN THEY INSISTED ON HIM. BUT REGARDLESS OF FINAL SELECTION, MIKI'S PROPOSAL OF MATSUNO AND FIRM REJECTION OF OHIRA IS ALMOST UNIVERSALLY INTERPRETED HERE AS REFLECTION OF MIKI'S DETERMINATION TO REMAIN IN OFFICE THROUGH THE YEAREND ELECTION.

5. REPLACEMENT OF PREVIOUS SECGEN, NAKASONE, WAS TAKEN AS GIVEN HERE FROM OUTSET OF SHUFFLE. TWO ORGANIZATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH HIS FACTION HAVE RECENTLY BEEN ACCUSED OF FAILING TO REPORT SUBSTANTIAL POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS. WIDELY SUSPECTED OF OPPORTUNISM BY POLITICIANS OF ALL STRIPES, HE MANAGED TO ALIENATE BOTH HIS OWN PARTY AND OPPOSITION PARTIES BY RECENT BACKSTAGE WHEELING-DEALING COMBINED WITH WELL PUBLICIZED BOASTING ABOUT ITS SUCCESS. FINALLY, HIS NAME HAS BEEN RAISED REPEATEDLY IN CONNECTION WITH THE LOCKHEED SCANDAL, DUE IN PART TO HIS HAVING PREVIOUSLY EMPLOYED INDICTED KODAMA SECRETARY AND HEIR APPARENT TACHIKAWA. SURROUNDED BY SUSPICION AND MISTRUST, NAKASONE MADE AN EXCEPTIONALLY GRACEFUL EXIT FROM HIS LEADERSHIP ROLE, TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR RECENT CONFUSION AMONG CONSERVATIVES.

6. ASSESSMENTS WILL DIFFER AS TO WHETHER MIKI OR HIS OPPONENTS GAINED GROUND THROUGH THE SHUFFLE. OUR OWN VIEW IS THAT MIKI SUFFERED SETBACK IN SELECTION OF LDP LEADERSHIP, ALTHOUGH APPOINTMENT OF STAUNCH MIKI SUPPORTER (MORIYAMA) AS DEPUTY
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SECGEN AND ACTIVIST ROLE ON MIKI'S BEHALF BY AN OUTRAGED MATSUNO WILL HELP HIM. CABINET APPOINTMENTS, ON OTHER HAND, WE INTERPRET AS SLIGHT PLUS FOR MIKI. CABINET IS NOW ROUGHLY BALANCED PRO AND ANTI-MIKI IN ALLEGIENCE AND ADDITION OF KOSAKA AND ISHIDA WILL STRENGTHEN MIKI'S HAND. FINALLY, BECAUSE IT IS MORE OR LESS CUSTOMARY FOR PRIME MINISTERIAL CONTENDERS TO LEAVE CABINET AT THIS POINT IN LIFE OF A PREDECESSOR ADMINISTRATION, WE BELIEVE MANY HERE WILL CONSIDER FUKUDA AND OHIRA'S CONTINUED WILLINGNESS TO SERVE UNDER MIKI AS A SIGN OF WEAKNESS. IN SUM, ALTHOUGH MIKI WILL HAVE ADDITIONAL SUPPORT IN HIS CABINET, IT WOULD BE MORE DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO WAGE AN ELECTION CAPAIGN WITH NEW LDP SECGEN SHOULD HE WISH TO DO SO.
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